

Revised  
27 December 1967

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Communist Reactions to Certain US Military Operations  
in Vietnam

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. How would the Communists react to US operations in the northern portion of the DMZ or in immediately adjacent territory of North Vietnam? We think the primary factor influencing their reactions would be what they believed these actions portended for the future. Would they estimate that the US was merely seeking to neutralize Communist bases and sanctuaries in border areas? Or would they judge that the US was making the first moves toward an eventual massive invasion of North Vietnam and thus to a major change in the war? In attempting to decipher US intentions, the Communists would examine the circumstances, nature and scope of the US operations, as well as what the US said about them.

2. Based on these assessments, the Communists would determine their countermeasures. These would include not only immediate moves to cope with the new tactical situation, but also longer term preparations to deal with possible future US actions. Hanoi would have to consider not only new deployments of its own forces but whether the time had come to request substantial numbers of "volunteers" from other Communist countries. At what point would Chinese combat troops be likely to enter North Vietnam in some numbers?

MORI/CDF Pages 1 & 2. L1

S-E-C-R-E-T

3. Generally speaking, we believe that of the three Communist partners, Hanoi would take the most somber view of the US action. The North Vietnamese leaders almost certainly believe that the US is already engaged in a track of escalation which, given their own unwillingness to negotiate, must have as its ultimate goal the overthrow of their regime. US operations in the northern DMZ, and particularly an invasion of North Vietnamese territory, would reinforce this belief. Moscow, on the other hand, is probably still willing to estimate that US objectives are more limited, and small-scale incursions into North Vietnam would probably not change this view. But the size, extent, and duration of the operations would clearly be of great significance in determining Communist assessments and Communist actions.

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Communist Reactions to Certain US Military Operations  
in Vietnam

Revised 27 Dec 1967

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

14. If US military operations seemed certain to expand well into North Vietnam and on a fairly large scale, the Soviets would probably feel impelled to take much more vigorous actions. On the one hand, they might try to convince Hanoi to change its policy, arguing that the DRV was faced with the danger of overwhelming dependence on China. They might also take some diplomatic action, regardless of Hanoi's desires, such as using their position as Geneva co-chairman to press for a cease fire or UN action. On the other hand, if the Hanoi regime rejected Soviet counsel, and US actions continued to expand into NVN, the Soviets might feel impelled to pursue a policy of much higher risks. They might, decide, for example, to create a crisis atmosphere either by putting pressures on Berlin or by introducing some elements of their own combat forces in North Vietnam.

S-E-C-R-E-T